

Good evening. My name is David Young – I am an owner and Director of a locally based business called TGE Group, which installs and distributes renewable energy microgeneration systems and energy efficiency products across the UK. The business was founded 7 years ago, it has been built out of cash flow and now employs 54 local people from our HQ in Cheshire

I left a secure and successful career in the Armed Forces to support a new industry that was focused on generating clean energy and to join a business that is committed to inculcating a behavioural agenda of saving energy. Now I am no tree hugger and I am no activist, but I do believe it is our moral duty to leave this planet in a better state than we found it, so I am determined to do something about it. I am therefore seriously concerned by the manner and reasoning behind the rather undemocratic push for Fracking in the UK, that seems to be a very blinkered, and in parts almost corrupt, agenda, that has been foolishly hyped up to redress our budget deficit seemingly at the expense of everything else.

With the overwhelming evidence of the dangers to health and the environment and the widespread acceptance that Shale Gas extraction will not reduce carbon emissions, we now turn to the economic arguments.

- The push for Shale Gas is a desperate gamble to increase tax revenue
- it is not going to solve our energy crisis,
- nor will it reduce the price of gas in the UK,
- and we believe it is highly unlikely to produce the number of local jobs predicted by the industry. It is worth noting that renewable energy is currently creating many more jobs per unit of energy generated than fossil fuel ventures. And a paper by Zero Carbon Britain has shown how we have the potential to generate 1.5 million green jobs in the UK. These are real, long-term jobs with long-term benefits and minimal risks or costs, in return for major environmental benefits.

In the UK we are blessed with a plethora of renewable resources including wind, tidal, wave and solar. In fact we have far more at our disposal than Germany and yet they are streets ahead of us in the renewable game. Denmark aims to be free of fossil fuels by 2050.

Let us make the most of our resources. Instead of pursuing this blind push for shale why doesn't the Council actively promote the alternatives, lead by example and create something really worthwhile with renewables? Why not think about greater use of heat pumps which are both efficient generators of heat and also yield a handsome income through the Govt's current renewable heat incentive, what about looking at improved storage for heat and why not push for more renewable power stations to reduce the dependency on gas? Installing Solar PV for example on all your schools could generate over £1M income pa, save about 30% on energy bills there and set the right tone in education.

Environmental campaigners are hoping that 2015 will be the year when the UK's cities go green. Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Munich, Seattle, Sydney and Lima have all committed to switching to using 100% clean energy by 2050, and now grassroots campaigns have been launched in 123 towns and cities across the UK. It is hoped that as many as 20 will pledge their commitment before the end of this year. Shouldn't Chester be one of them?

If you want gas, how about investing in "green gas"? Substitute natural gas can be created directly from abundant commercial and municipal waste and other biomass sources for injection into the national grid. Gasification of waste can also provide a sustainable and carbon negative means of diverting waste from landfill.

Yes we are going to continue to need gas for some years yet, but we need to start using less not more – Drilling for shale gas will prolong our dependency on gas and lock us in to yesterday's gas infrastructure. Not only that but it could take 15 years to get Shale Gas on line at great risk and expense. During this time we should be going all out to address the long term issues and not be distracted by hydraulic fracturing. Just think of the progress we will have made in renewables and energy storage in 15 years – By then we may not need gas at all. The only thing standing in the way is the political will.

Finally – When we hear that the State of New York has just banned fracking on environmental and health grounds and read the latest IPCC report that states that we must stop using fossil fuels to avoid catastrophic climate change, I find it staggering that we are even considering the second order economic argument. At its very best fracking is a small stop gap measure. At worst it is a serious environmental and health hazard, and a short term experiment fuelled by vested interest that is deflecting everyone's attention away from the long term agenda of energy saving and clean, safe renewables. I urge you all to look forward in a positive manner and not be blinded by this foolish agenda.